Santa Cruz County Democratic Party Endorsement Questionnaire for the Primary Election 2024

Must be completed and submitted no later than December 1, 2023 at 5 PM.
Santa Cruz County Democrats, PO Box 7763, Santa Cruz, 95061,
or by email: endorsements@cruzdcc.groups.io

The Santa Cruz County Democratic Central Committee will be considering endorsing eligible Democrats who have qualified to appear on the ballot in the Primary Election on March 5, 2024 for both contested and uncontested positions. In order to be eligible, a candidate must be a registered Democrat for at least three months prior to the final filing date for that candidate's race in this election. An endorsement by us automatically carries an endorsement by the California Democratic Party.

All eligible candidates who wish to be considered for endorsement are invited to complete our Candidate Endorsement Questionnaire and **return a copy** electronically **(1)** via Google Forms, **or (2)** by email to endorsements@cruzdcc.groups.io no later than December 1, 2023 at 5 PM, **or (3)** by USPS Mail postmarked no later than November 27th, to arrive by December 1, 2023 to Santa Cruz County Democratic Central Committee, PO Box 7763, Santa Cruz, CA 95061. Due to recently implemented USPS delays, we encourage an electronic reply.

Thank you for submitting your questionnaire. We look forward to hearing from you at our Endorsement Forum on **December 13, 2023 at 7 PM** at LOCATION TBD

Questions: Please email us at endorsements@cruzdcc.groups.io

Email *

shebreh4santacruz@gmail.com

Candidate Name *

Shebreh Kalantari-Johnson

Candidate Phone Number *

(831) 227-8228

Candidate Email *

shebreh4santacruz@gmail.com

Preferred Mailing Address *

849 Almar Avenue Suite C #432, SC CA 95060

Preferred Phone Number *

(831) 227-8228

Name of Campaign Committee and FPPC *

Shebreh Kalantari-Johnson for Santa Cruz City Council District 3, 2024, FPPC #1459143

Campaign Website *

shebreh.org

Social Media *

shebreh4sc

Candidate headshot for future use should candidate be endorsed

SKJ.headshot.20...

What are the approximate years you have been registered as Democrat in Santa Cruz County? *

22 years-since becoming a Citizen in 2001.

Have you been registered in another county? If so, in what county were you registered and how long were you registered?

No

Describe your involvement with the Democratic Party in the local, state, or national level over the past few years. *

I have supported democratic candidates in local, state and national races including City Council, Board of Supervisors, School Superintendent, School Board,(although these are non-partisan, I inquire about party affiliation), State Assembly, State Senate, Congress and Governors races. I have supported these races through serving on election committees, providing endorsements, canvassing, and helping with fundraising. I am a member of the Democratic Women's Club, Iranian American Democrats of California, and League of Women Voters.

List the 10 organizational or personal endorsements of your candidacy that you consider to be the most important or most representative of your campaign (Please separate each endorsement with a semicolon). *

Fred Keeley - Mayor, Former Assembly Speaker Pro-Tem; Renee Golder - Vice-Mayor; Martine Watkins - Councilmember, Former Mayor; Sonja Brunner - Councilmember, Former Mayor; Ryan Coonerty – Former Mayor and District 3 County Supervisor; Mike Rotkin – Former Mayor; Planned Parenthood Mar Monte; SMART Local 0023 (bus driver's union); Santa Cruz City Firefighters Local 1716; LiUNA Local 270 (Laborers International Union of North America)

Briefly describe the aspects of your background and experiences that indicate your qualifications for the office you seek. *

My life experience as an Iranian immigrant has shaped my values of community, compassion and hard work. These values have set me on my path of investing in our community's health. I've done this through my nonprofit and public sector work successfully over the last 20 years. I know that my personal, education, and professional backgrounds will be an asset to our city council
For the last two decades I have dedicated my work to building strong equitable communities. I received my Bachelors in Psychology and French from UC Santa Cruz and a Masters in Social Work from San Jose State. As a public health and social services professional, and someone who has brought in over $40 million in grant funds to help our community, I know first-hand how important it is for local governments to provide leadership and resources to address our most serious challenges and work together towards community well-being. I was initially inspired to run in 2020 because I saw challenges all around me and wanted to be in a position to support my community. At the start of the pandemic, I was invited to co-lead the county's emergency response team to stand up shelter in place sites for transition aged youth who were unhoused. The partnerships that were forged and the swift action inspired me to do more in my community. Over the last three years that I've served on council I've done just that. I've worked with my colleagues to address some of our communities' most challenging issues. Some of these include:
-Supporting the development of workforce housing
-Working with our Metro team and bus driver's union to increase resources and modernize our public transportation system
-Standing up an entire City Homelessness Division so that those on the streets and living in vehicles could be offered safe shelter and find support to get on a pathway to permanent housing
-Brought forth and passed an actionable equity resolution-one specific action from this work has been to revise how we outreach and recruit for our city commissions so they are more representative of our community
-Ensuring safe access to West Cliff after the 2023 Winter storms by implementing emergency measures
-Formalizing our City's commitment to youth well-being by pioneering the county's first Children and Youth Bill of Rights and supporting the Children's Fund
-Fostering a vibrant and welcoming downtown with initiatives like permanent outdoor dining and downtown ambassadors
Outside of my work, I have volunteered and served and continue to serve on multiple boards, commissions, and committees that all work towards community well-being. These include:
-METRO Board, Board Chair (current)
-Community Action Board, Board member (current)
-Youth Action Network, Elected Official member (current)
-Santa Cruz County Criminal Justice Council, alternate member (current)
-Central California Alliance for Health (local managed care carrier), Commissioner -7 years (past-term ended September 2023)
-Community Health Trust of the Pajaro Valley, Board member and former Board Chair-8 years (past-term ended June 2022)
-Dignity Health, Community Advisory Board's Community Giving Committee and Community Advisory Board Chair (past)
-United Way of Santa Cruz County, Community Assessment Project Steering Committee and Community Impact Committee (past)
I have been effective, I have the experience, and I am energized to continue to serve our city. Progress is

accomplished through caring deeply, listening, building consensus, and being in action-this is what I have brought over the last three years and this is what I am committed to continue to bring.

What are the top five major issues facing this office? (Please label each one and briefly describe. Separate each with a semicolon). *

1. Youth & Families. As a mom and public health professional dedicated to youth well-being, I've championed policies prioritizing youth and families. Spearheading our county's first Children and Youth Bill of Rights, I've committed our city to principles uplifting youth. We've established a children's fund from cannabis tax, introduced a stipended youth liaison, and integrated a youth well-being focus into policy decisions. I'm devoted to furthering these efforts during my next council term. My agenda includes exploring new revenue sources for youth programs, ensuring safe and accessible parks, and expanding protected bike lanes for safer school routes.;
2. Homelessness. As someone who worked in San Francisco's Tenderloin and with youth and young adults with lived experience in our community, I understand the complexities of homelessness. Most recently, as a city councilmember, I worked on policies that set parameters on time, place and manner for encampments and oversized vehicles while successfully advocating for services such as safe sleeping, transitional shelter, and safe parking. These efforts have resulted in a 29% decrease in unsheltered persons in the city of Santa Cruz in a year (Point in Time Count 2022). These are unprecedented numbers. Should I be given the opportunity to serve another four years, I will work on ensuring continued investment in City's homelessness programs including outreach, safe sleeping, transitional shelter, and safe parking. I will also ensure that we continue to invest in community programs that provide tenant protections.;
3. Housing. Housing is a public health and social equity issue. I have supported housing projects that increase our housing stock, provide affordable and workforce housing, maintain the integrity of our community, and improve our downtown. On the city council, I formed a Housing Element subcommittee to ensure that we are not only meeting state laws in our revised housing element but truly meeting our communities needs. Our subcommittee worked hard on a robust policy plan for the Housing Element's new policy section-Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing. AFFH is a policy direction to eliminate housing discrimination. Through our efforts, our city has recently been given the Prohousing Designation and is one of 6% of jurisdictions across the State to meet our Regional Housing (RHNA) goals in the previous (5th) housing cycle. In the next four years, I will ensure that we implement.;
4. Emergency Preparedness & Recovery. After last winter's storms, I have been working with city staff to restore the areas of our cliffs that were destroyed-ensuring that our community has safe access. We have also been planning for long-term coastal resiliency. I put forward a council action for our city teams to launch a robust community planning process to develop a long-range 50 year plan for coastal resiliency and climate response.;
5. Climate Action- will continue to work on other actions that will advance our climate response as a community. This includes:
-Equitable renewable energy programs such as solar;
-Adopting innovative water conservation initiatives;
-Ensuring access to rebates and incentives for all income brackets from homeowners to renters;
-Prioritizing walkable communities; and
-Supporting sustainable transit options that address Santa Cruz's County-wide number one source of carbon emissions.
I will be working closely with the Mayor's Climate Action Task Force and our City's Sustainability Manager and team to ensure that our adopted Climate Action Plan is being implemented as proposed.

In 2022, voters overwhelming voted against the Greenway initiative (Measure D). However, there are still concerns about the likelihood of the rail trail being built and the environmental impacts it could cause. Please explain your position on the rail trail and public transportation in our community. *

I was opposed to Measure D and supported the No on D efforts. I believe that a rail and trail solution is not only feasible but also essential for our community's sustainable development. As the Chair of the Metro Board, I'm deeply committed to fostering partnerships across diverse agencies to make the rail and trail option a reality.
Collaborating closely with Metro staff and the SMART Local 0023, our bus driver's union, has been instrumental in our efforts to modernize the Metro system. We've launched a comprehensive strategic planning process to address community needs and modernize our services, revamping routes, and increasing frequency to boost ridership. The first phase of this revamping will begin in December 2023. The successful pilot of a youth ride free program has positively changed perceptions among young residents, encouraging public transportation use. All these efforts collectively contribute to the realization of a transit-oriented community.
This modernization is a crucial step in preparing our community to be a robust partner when the rail system is introduced. The significant progress made by Metro in the past year, resulting in national recognition and the influx of over $50 million in transit funds, underscores our commitment to improving public transportation. These achievements validate our community's potential to embrace innovative solutions that integrate eco-friendly transport options while enhancing connectivity. I firmly believe that a well-designed rail trail can be implemented responsibly, balancing the benefits of efficient public transportation with environmental preservation.

Housing is still among the top issues in the county. Many residents are rent-burdened and find it difficult to gain the generational wealth that previous generations have been able to build. How will you address housing issues in your district and the county overall? *

As mentioned earlier, I have been working with the Housing Element Subcommittee to ensure that the City of Santa Cruz has strong housing policies. One important action is to actively implement new policies and initiatives aimed at reducing barriers to housing construction, such as ministerial approval for qualifying housing projects, exploring the possibilities offered by SB10 and SB9, and streamlining the construction of accessory dwelling units (ADUs). Additionally, we need to plan for comprehensive housing diversity to foster truly inclusive and diverse communities. In the process of revising the Housing Element, our council subcommittee collaborated with staff to pinpoint opportunity zones throughout the city. We also worked to develop policies aimed at moving away from exclusionary zoning practices. As a significant step in this direction, the City Council approved a REAP 2.0 grant application. This grant seeks to establish objective standards for single-family home-zoned areas and provides pathways for implementing SB10.
I would support a city measure that explores tax increases or bond initiatives to bolster our local resources dedicated to affordable housing. Additionally, I have been, and will continue to advocate for directing revenues generated from the sales of city land/property into our Affordable Housing Trust Fund, further strengthening our commitment to affordable housing initiatives.
We also need to enhance and extend our tenant protection efforts. This could include:
1. Advocacy at the State Level: Collaborate with state legislators to champion laws that alleviate the burden on renters, such as the elimination of application fees, the introduction of a standardized 'common application fee,' further restrictions on security deposit amounts, and the provision of the right to counsel for tenants facing evictions.
2. Strengthen Partnerships: Continue and enhance collaboration with the County Housing Authority to refine security deposit loan programs, possibly by pre-qualifying tenants before their apartment search.
3. Local Employment Preference: Implement a local employment preference policy for housing to prioritize individuals employed within the City, promoting community engagement.
4. Childcare Integration: Integrate childcare centers within housing construction projects to increase opportunities for affordable childcare services within our community.
5. Invest in Tenant Protection Services: Continue to invest in tenant protection services and legal aid programs, exploring potential sources of increased funding, such as allocating a portion of the Transient Occupancy Tax (TOT) to renters' programs for Santa Cruz residents.
6. Culturally Appropriate Outreach: Provide culturally tailored outreach to tenants regarding programs like rental inspections, code enforcement, and tenant protection/assistance initiatives. This ensures accessibility and inclusivity for all members of our community.

How will you ensure that the County's (or City's) infrastructure (such as water, electricity, roads) are maintained equitably in your district? *

A comprehensive approach is needed to ensure equitable maintenance of essential infrastructure within the City and within the Districts. This involves conducting thorough needs assessments to prioritize areas in urgent need, transparently allocating resources based on factors like population density and historical neglect, and actively engaging communities in decision-making processes. It will also be important to monitor and address any emerging disparities in various areas of the city.

What steps will you take towards having a climate resiliency and mitigation plan in place to ensure the safety of all the residents with equity in mind? *

To ensure climate resiliency and safety for all residents with equity in mind, I've already taken significant steps. Following recent storms, I've collaborated with city staff to restore damaged cliff areas, prioritizing safe community access. Simultaneously, I've initiated plans for a comprehensive 50-year coastal resiliency and climate response strategy through a council action, ensuring an inclusive community planning process. Our ongoing climate action involves multiple measures benefiting our community, including equitable renewable energy programs, innovative water conservation, accessible incentives for all income brackets, emphasis on walkable communities, and support for sustainable transit. Collaborating closely with the Mayor's Climate Action Task Force and our City's Sustainability Manager, my commitment lies in overseeing the effective implementation of our adopted Climate Action Plan, ensuring safety and equity for all residents in the face of climate challenges.

Please provide an example of when and how input and/or evidence has convinced you to override your initial opinion on a public policy issue? *

Initially, I opposed the 831 Water Project when it first reached the council, primarily due to concerns regarding the separation of two buildings, with one designated for affordable housing and the other for market-rate housing. However, I later reevaluated my position and cast a 'yes' vote, understanding that funding limitations made it challenging to alter the project's structure.

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